

# The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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WHETHER it will be possible one day for man to discover if other worlds besides our own are inhabited by human beings, intelligent or not, is a problem I find impossible to solve; but it is one that must have greatly concerned many independent thinkers during our own past ages. Perhaps other writers long before Lucian had broached the question, and perhaps many others between

him and Cyrano de Bergerac also dealt with it. Did not the famous old oculist, Jerome Cardan, claim that two old men came through his closed doors one evening, told him that they came from the moon, and disappeared? Cyrano tells us the story as a sort of preface

to his own book on a voyage to the moon which he found inhabited by people, one of whom told him that he was actually in Paradise, and that it had never been entered except by six people—Adam, Eve, Enoch, Elias (this was the gentleman who was speaking to him on the moon), St. John and himself—that is Cyrano. He found, in addition, plenty of sirens, fauns, and satyrs, while the people themselves were twelve feet high.

Cyrano later went to the sun, which he found also inhabited, and this once again allowed his fantastic imagination full play. But of course it was all imagination which in matters factual should have no place. Swift did this kind of thing as well as most people—perhaps best of all—but when it came to putting *science* on to the problem, Jules Verne shirked the issue. He thought of a rocket to be fired at the moon, but as he had very little genuine information as to what would really be found there, he cleverly schemed to have his rocket deflected by a comet and it never reached the moon. All the same, his *From Earth to the Moon* is a fine piece of work.

It happens, however, that there is one great man, undoubtedly a great scientist as well, who has actually seen people from other planets, and we either have to believe him or insist that he was suffering from delusions. When Swedenborg is mentioned, most people who know anything about his history, are apt to think that he was responsible for an interpretation of Christianity as silly as that of Mrs. Eddy. He has had notable defenders, of course, and I believe that he has still many followers.

Whether even these can now read his ponderous and interminable books, with their queer expositions of Biblical stories, I do not know. Swedenborg belongs to a type of Christian who can defend anything in the Bible, no matter how stupid, by blandly explaining its "symbolical" meaning, or the "signification of various terms and subjects in the Word." This is quite easy once you have grasped the method. At first deny that it means what it says. For example—this is Swedenborg's own example from *Arcana Coelestia*—if you read, "And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses," point out that this means "clemency." "Jehovah has no anger" insists Swedenborg, and he goes on to explain that "anger" in the Bible really means "clemency and

mercy." When the Lord said: "Cursed be Canaan," all this means is "to avert one's self from the Lord." And so on. One can fill thousands of pages with similar stupidities—but you mustn't believe it is twaddle unless you interpret the word "twaddle" as meaning "wisdom."

But for the moment Swedenborg deserves our attention because he boldly declared that the other planets and suns were inhabited, and he could see these inhabitants when he liked. It is true that he saw them only through his "spirit" or with his "spirit eye" but they were there and real none the less. Swedenborg could talk with any spirits and angels—and the other worlds had spirits and

angels quite as real as ours.

Let us see what he has to say about Jupiter as a sample of his experiences. I choose Jupiter because he claims he had more intercourse with the spirits and angels there than with those of any other planet. Our own Astronomer Royal, Dr. Spencer Jones, tells us that "Jupiter is entirely covered with an ice layer several thousands of miles thick. Outside this is the dense poisonous atmosphere, a few thousand miles in depth." Now as a very good scientist himself (he was the forerunner of the nebular theory) Swedenborg must have known quite well that the surface of Jupiter and its atmosphere were very different from ours. Yet he goes on to describe its inhabitants as if they were more or less like ourselves. There was a multitude of men in Jupiter, the land was fertile, everything was abundant, they only wanted necessities of life, they loved their children and took the greatest care in educating them, they were divided into nations and families, they never coveted their neighbours' possessions, and looked upon crime as contrary to human nature. In fact, the people on Jupiter were better than any on the other planets.

Swedenborg got all this from some of the spirits and angels who once had been alive there, but he was permitted to see what they looked like and found as he says, "they were like the faces of the men of our earth, fair and beautiful." These people, by the way, saw our faces through Swedenborg's eyes, and found them—alas!—"not beautiful."

Among many other virtues possessed by the inhabitants of Jupiter—I really ought to say that they possessed all the virtues—they took good care to worship "one only Lord." I shudder to think what Swedenborg might have said if he had found they worshipped like the old Romans, dozens of Gods. And I should like to add here that I have never found out exactly why it is considered much more holy to worship one God only than a dozen. Of course, the one only God of the Jupiterites is called Jesus Christ, and they sing psalms to him in a tent.

Swedenborg says many other things and also gives copious details of his conversations with the spirits and angels from other planets—all of whom, I believe, also acknowledge the one only Lord—perhaps because he happens to be the Lord of Swedenborg.

## VIEWS and OPINIONS Life on Other Worlds Again

By H. CUTNER

It is a pity that our very sceptical astronomers never heed the spirit revelations given to the world through Swedenborg and the goodness of the Lord. Or, to put it another way—they never take the slightest notice of the Word which God revealed to Man for his Salvation. After all, is the nonsense put out by Swedenborg any sillier than the astronomical nonsense in the Bible? Is it not a fact that the B.B.C. and our educational authorities still teach that God "made the stars also."? Do they not insist

that after the Resurrection "our Lord" ascended to Heaven? Do they not make our children believe in the story of Elijah and the Fiery Chariot and in the Lord stopping the Sun and Moon so that the Israelites can whack hell out of their enemies in a bloody battle?

Would our educational authorities dare to make Dr. Spencer Jones's book on life in other worlds a standard textbook? And would the Churches agree?

## World Union of Freethinkers

### "HUMANI GENERIS" SPEECH BY JEAN COTEREAU (FRANCE)

(Concluded from page 339)

#### II.—THE NEW TENDENCIES IN THEOLOGY

1. *As to a pretended evolution of dogma.*—The history of dogmas reveals that these are nothing more than the work of men and hence in constant flux, far from being the revelations of an immutable deity. Catholic theology has to maintain the pretence of unchangeability until under pressure from without it collapses utterly.

2. *Dogmatic relativity.*—The Vatican maintains its position against those who would rejuvenate the "science of God." A century back it supported Aquinas and his medieval sophistications. Modernist reaction, tamed perhaps and repressed by the Vatican, still reacts, and the majestic facade of the ancient edifice of the Church hides many a crack.

*Concerning contempt for scholastic theology.*—The Church has never ceased, as anyone "not engaged" and with some modicum of information is aware, to hamper scientific advance; and its rally to the support of science in recent years has had the inevitable effect of clogging the latter with ideological preoccupations which can only stultify it. There is nothing in the Bible which supports the claim that Jesus had in view the establishment of a church and much less the institution of the Papacy. Nevertheless under pretext of accomplishing the teaching of Christ, the Vatican limits and confines the freedom of research even of such bondmen as the Catholic theologians.

Although the Pope does not pretend to infallibility in this encyclical, his opinion has the force of law. He maintains that the dogma of the Assumption set out in 1950 and unknown to the Fathers of the Church was implied in their writings and especially in Christ's Revelations. The pontifical text bears witness to the opposition between the scientific spirit which goes from the known to the unknown and the theological mind when both are inspired by a need for compromise after an accomplished act.

3. *The authority of Holy Writ is undermined.*—The Sovereign Pontiff takes a stand against those authorities who, aware of the impossibility in the XXth century of sustaining literal explanations of certain primitive texts, endeavour to interpret them as allegories or symbols.

4. *Other perilous tendencies in connection with particular errors.*—Freethought denies that reason can demonstrate the existence of a personal God, and maintains that Catholic faith is based on the completely irrational. The Pope demonstrates that the Church is as intolerant as when it damned heretics as well as burning them alive.

#### III.—THE POSITION OF THE TRADITIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE CHURCH

Right thinking is only on the lines directed by the Church, particularly by the Pope, and provided that the conclusion is the Catholic faith. This principle conditions

logic. Many Freethinkers consider metaphysics a sterile exercise. The Catholic terms of "sufficient reason" and "finality" the worst verbal abstractions; and the Pope gives his authority to out-of-date modes of thought. The Catholic principle that new facts and theories must be in line with the so-called eternal truths has determined the action of the Church towards science from the early persecutions to to-day's sophistries.

Scholastic philosophy from which Descartes and his successors had to some degree freed the human mind is restored to honour by the Church and combined with the methods of Loyola forms a basis for the worst kind of intellectual perversion, incapable of progress.

*Attacks on philosophy.*—The philosophy taught by the Church is outworn and we cannot admit that the philosophy of Aquinas is genuine rationalism. Scholastic reasoning, made up of exegesis and metaphysical verbalism, is very different from scientific thought, i.e. from rationalism. It is natural but none the less disturbing that the Church should pretend to govern thought, even as it is natural that the Church should arrogate to herself the right to govern all forms of human activity, to enforce a totalitarian ideology.

#### IV.—BIOLOGY AND HISTORY

Scientific facts verified scientifically are unacceptable if they impinge on Holy Writ and tradition in opposition to divine revelation. Although it allows reservations to the faithful in the matter of evolution, the Vatican pretends to be sole judge of scientific questions, even as between Catholic scientists.

The Pope shows a repugnance for free discussion of evolutionary theory, e.g. concerning the human body, even if he does not reject it straightway. The Bible incommodes the Church for the latter would declare either that it has always accepted, or that it has always condemned evolution, according to circumstances.

*Polygenism and Monogenism.*—The former, holding as it does that man derives from several stocks, is rejected by the Pope, since Christianity proclaims that men come from Adam, and Adam only. Moreover polygenism is incompatible with original sin, with the Redemption, with the Incarnation, and finally with the Church's mission. The study of pre-history cannot accept the naive fancy of Babylonian cosmogony that a single ancestor produced the human race some six thousand years ago; it notes that humanity can claim an age amounting to some hundreds of thousands of years. The Pope refrains from giving an opinion on cave men, but hails this abstention as the perfect agreement between science and faith. Such are the sophistries by which the Church maintains itself with a threat of coercion, intellectual maybe to-day but corporal yesterday.

*The Historic Character of the first eleven chapters of Genesis.*—In History, as in Biology and Anthropology, the Church's rules of caution must be observed, says the Pope. Very subtly he sets out the limits of history till his encyclical becomes almost meaningless. The Pope repeats that there is a sort of history which is not objective; but that no Freethinker can admit. Catholic commentators on the Bible must define in what sense a chapter may be historic; we distrust such definition. The Pope contrasts the simplicity of Holy Writ with the complexity of ancient mythologies. Note that the Pope can choose whether to accept a text as literal fact or as an article of faith. Whenever he is hampered by the naivety of a holy text, he can fall back on subtle explanation.

This Encyclical does not seem to modify in any way the Church's earlier position with respect to the first two chapters of Genesis. The Encyclical *Pascendi* of September 8, 1907, forbade doubt as to the literal truth of the first three chapters, the most ridiculous, and on June 3, 1909, the Biblical Commission proclaimed the historical truth (v. *Ecclesia*, p. 347) of the special creation of man, of the formation of the first woman taken from the first man, of the unity of the human race, of the sin against divine

order at the instigation of the Devil disguised as a serpent. V.

The paragraph recalling their duties to the rank and file is directed by the Pope to his subordinates and the Freethinker's only comment can be that he sets out in it his pretension to absolutism.

The Encyclical is a confirmation of Vatican principles. It is difficult to read on account of the tortuous thought hedged in by precaution, advancing to retreat; but the Pope has not launched anathema in a cloud of insults. This may be by prudence, or by strategy. In moderate language Pius XII has repeated the condemnation of "modern errors."

That all is not smooth sailing within the Church is evident, but must not be exaggerated. There may be strife between modernists and integrists, but the Pope has the last word. It may be that the Church needs the support of retrograde countries such as Spain, Ireland, and Latin America, but the Pope's backward move has surprised his supporters in countries such as France. It should disperse any dangerous illusion that the Church may be tolerant. It is still the Church of the Syllabus and a threat to social progress.

## The Undefeatable

By JOHN O'HARE

EMILY BRONTE—"our greatest woman," as Barrie called her—wrote but one novel, but in that book she reached the top of Everest. This is not an inapt phrase, for in *Wuthering Heights* there is much of the sensation of sublimity, much of the enchantment of savage distance, much of the avalanche and the stupefying storm, a great deal of the unconquerable.

It would be difficult indeed, if not impossible, to name any other book by any other woman that approaches so near to the "mighty line" of expression, and in some pages rises equal in utterance to those men who spoke so splendidly when Shakespeare paused. There is magic here. There is the undisputable seal and sign of poetic genius. The wonder is, and must always be, how such a book came of a consumptive little spinster tucked away in a primitive corner of England. For three generations pundits and Freudians have "explained" Emily, and will continue to do so. The terse answer, the un-Baconian reply, that she was a genius, must suffice for our brief space. But perhaps it would be not unfitting, in view of the revival of interest in Emily, to take another look at the physical circumstances out of which a masterpiece came.

In the early nineteenth century Yorkshire was a remote place, large tracts of which were under the feudal domination of rough squires. To this uncouth county, in 1820, came an out-of-this-world Irishman, the Rev. Patrick Brontë, with a wife, five young daughters and a small son, and settled in a parsonage on the steep outskirts of a village called Haworth. Mrs. Brontë soon died, followed by the two elder girls. Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Branwell were left, with Charlotte as the inevitable mother to the others. They all had tuberculosis. Branwell grew up and took to drink. The girls worked as governesses at intervals, and Charlotte and Emily spent a period in Brussels as teachers. But they always came back home. They were bound together much more closely than most families, perhaps because of the disease that claimed them all and gave them foreknowledge of their common doom. From infancy the four of them had written stories, poems

and histories. They had no playmates. Tradition cut them off from the local children and, indeed, they had little in common with children anywhere. They were a "queer lot" from the start, prematurely wise and introspective. They had that Irish sadness about them which exhibits itself to the English as gaiety (for what is gaiety but melancholy's public face: happiness, like deep waters, is mostly still); they were shy as deer, solemn as night, deep as mystery.

Picture, then, that stone house curtained against the darkness. Outside, the howling north-east wind rips from Ultima Thule, sending draughts like knives across the flags. The candlelight is frantic. Despite the cloth wedges, the windows rattle like kettledrums. Winter is on the moors. Snow is on its way, to make the albino earth as trackless as the Arctic. The petrifying northern bleakness has come. And inside the house, close together by the erratic fire, three frail women—"Messrs. Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell"—are writing, writing. The gentle Anne is writing *Agnes Grey* (George Moore's "perfect novel"); the great-browed Charlotte is writing *Jane Eyre*; and there is Emily—Emily, putting all the elemental passion of the night on to paper. She is writing *Wuthering Heights*. Not all her attention is on the page: one part of her mind is listening for the drunken footsteps of Branwell, stumbling through the graveyard on his way back from the village inn. He and she have a perilous affinity with each other. It will be Emily who will rise quickly and let the wastrel in and get him to bed, before the browsing Patrick in the next room can become aware of his son's condition. While yet she listens she is creating Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw—or is she creating them? Or are they not already there in the tumultuous night? Heathcliff and the wayward Cathy, and their strange love that found its consummation only in the death of both.

An impossible pair, as impossible as Prospero's island, but just as convincing, just as magically compelling, when the book is opened and they come to life by the power of the wasting virgin's great art. Who, having once read,

(Continued on page 348)

## ACID DROPS

A delicate problem arose when the Anglo-German Association recently held its first dinner. Present were Cardinal Griffin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, and Dr. Wand, Anglican Bishop of London. Who should say grace? Lord Pakenham, Mr. Herbert Morrison and Mr. F. J. Bellenger held a hurried conference and found the tactful way out. *There was no grace.* To suit the Cardinal and the Bishop, God Almighty was pushed unceremoniously aside.

Materialisation used to be very much in evidence in select spiritualist circles at one time, but only rarely these days does one hear of Uncle Albert, long since dead, or Aunt Sally, or Baby Celia, hopping out of the cabinet exactly as they were in this Vale of Tears and assuring everybody how happy they are now to be in Summerland. So it came rather as a shock to find our all-believing contemporary, *Psychic News*, the other day, recording a large number of materialisations at a seance in Cardiff presided over by a Mrs. Novak; and, instead of making a big splash of such an immortal event, giving only a third of a column to it and very small headlines. Perhaps Mrs. Novak is not in favour or—even if it is blasphemy, we must say it—perhaps the editor had just a weeny, teeny bit of unbelief in the whole occurrence. We wonder!

A leader in the "Manchester Guardian" dealing with Prof. Bury's *History of Freedom of Thought*, quotes the historian: "The process of his evolution has overcome, in increasing measure, the bad element in man, and will go on overcoming it still more." Bury was, of course, a Victorian optimist, and thought (as so many of his contemporaries thought) that science and evolution had at last shown the world that religion was not true, and thus slowly, if not quickly, that the religious spirit would be dissipated. He was wrong. The totalitarianism taught for centuries by Christianity has survived if anything in a more virulent form.

All observers can see it in the recurrence of Fascism, Communism, and Nazism, the believers in which are as fanatical as were the most thorough of medieval Christians. The Messiah, if no longer Jesus Christ, is the particular "fuhrer" of the hour, and he has to be believed in with the blind belief taught by the Christian Deity: "If a man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." This is the religious spirit, and it may yet take many centuries of evolution to eliminate it.

Prof. Bury may well have thought that it had been eliminated, but he was mistaken. Millions of people all over the world still believe in the Bible, in its stories and miracles, and they are often helped by many people who, though they themselves no longer believe in fables, in miracles, and in a Jerusalem Messiah, are quite ready to believe in the modern miracle of a "paradise" so long as it is guaranteed by somebody calling himself a leader. And that belief is merely the blind, old, religious spirit.

Nobody need be surprised that the question of Angels came up at a recent Convocation with our brilliant Archbishop of Canterbury pleading that there must be Angels as the Bible tells him so. Did not an Angel come to Joseph in a dream and tell him that his wife was going to have a Babe with the Holy Ghost as its Father? If that does not prove that there are Angels in Heaven, what

in Purgatory can? The only thing that disturbs Dr. Fisher is that some misguided people want to put up over graves statues made of *Italian* marble—enough to make Joseph's Angel shudder with horror in Heaven. It is really going too far. However, we are glad that he reassured his flock on the reality of Angels—God bless him!

The Bishop of Middleton is very disturbed at the increasing "materialism" of the age. Of course. His job is in jeopardy. He deplored the "terrible lack of leaders"—that is, he was unable to understand that, first, most young people are quite *indifferent* to Christianity. Second, those that make even a cursory examination of its tenets can see that it is all myth and fable. And third, our young people are far more attracted towards the political side of life—especially if there is a chance of obtaining one of the "jobs for the boys." Unfortunately, it is the "religious" spirit which still prevails, and it may take centuries to dislodge that.

More drivel has been broadcast to our children on the existence of God. The latest speaker, a Chaplain, quite as incoherent as the others, claims that if you can only envisage God as a Creator *and* a Saviour you have proved his existence! This particular speaker does not seem over confident as to the truth of the Genesis story—but, as he points out, even if it is stolen from Babylonian myths, all this means they had the "revelation" first. He really ought to join our Jesuits.

## THE UNDEFEATABLE—(Concluded)

can ever forget the lost Cathy, wailing outside the frozen window for the diabolical Heathcliff? "Woman wailing for her demon lover." It is a story beyond time and place; it lies on that perpetual borderland in our mind where half-glimpsed memories lurk, more real to us than a cry in the midday street—the hinterland of sub-consciousness against which our daily life is but the fringe of experience.

This was the story Emily was writing while she was sitting there listening. On the morrow, if the snow had not come, she would walk across the moors, a handkerchief in which to cough clutched in her hand. She would never confess to weakness. She forbade doctors. She had within her something that was stronger than strength—a fierce vitality that came from the imminence of death. Undoubtedly she sought Heathcliff, that terrible lover of her heart's imagining, lowering as the sombre ridges crowned with cruelly twisted trees. Somewhere on the moors, alone, Emily Brontë was Cathy. Then she came back to the house and picked up her pen. So came *Wuthering Heights*. That book, together with a few splendid poems, was Emily Brontë's addition to the world's riches. Of course the book has many faults. Imperfection is as much a part of a major achievement as perfection. Any clever person can write a perfect limerick; only a great poet could write the *Ode to a Nightingale*, which is imperfect. *Wuthering Heights* goes counter to every rule for the writing of successful fiction. It runs the gamut of the mistakes the gentlemen with the text-books condemn. But, by the bones of every dreary perfectionist scribbling his way into oblivion, the book is superb!

When she was thirty, not very long after her book appeared, Emily died—standing up, so it is said. That would be just like Emily. Only death had a stronger will than she.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

ALFRED P. CORRICK.—Thanks for pamphlet, "Jehovah's Witnesses," like Jehovah Himself, "move in mysterious ways their wonders to perform."

A. YATES.—Thank you for your material. We hope to make use of it shortly.

ERRATUM.—We must apologise to Mr. Arthur C. Carpenter for an unfortunate technical error in last week's issue (October 26, 1952). Line 14, which read, "But still we must tell 'em they've got to be saved," was inadvertently omitted. Instead, line 18 was repeated: "We've still got to set 'em two thousand years back." We tender our sincere apologies to Mr. Carpenter, whose humorous verse is so greatly appreciated by both the Editor and the readers of this journal.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s.; half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices should reach the Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Plattfields).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m.; (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site), every Sunday, 8 p.m.; (Alexandra Park Gate), every Wednesday, 8 p.m.; (Deansgate Bomb Site), every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square). — Saturday, November 1, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

### INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: W. G. K. FORD, M.Sc., "Some Problems Facing the United States."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 4, 7 p.m.: Mrs. Y. A. M. STOTT, "The Rights of Animals."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: PAT SLOAN (Secretary of the B.S.F.S.), "Russia After Fifteen Years."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street). — Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: A. GORMAN, "The Achievements of the Present Conservative Government."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1). — Sunday, 11 a.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "Is there a Soul?"

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1). — Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: A. P. PERRIN, "Freethought and the State."

## Sugar Plum

The Merseyside Branch N.S.S. announces that preparations are afoot for new and increased activities by the branch in and around Liverpool. Local readers wishing to receive details should contact the Branch Secretary, Mr. Walter C. Parry, 476, Mill Street, Liverpool 8 (telephone Lark Lane 3640).

## Proud Exit

"Now I will show them how an Atheist can die."

—JOHN SEIBERT, *obit* Nov. 5, 1951

Like to a bullock  
Rushing round the slaughter-house to hide,  
Man would dodge the clock:  
Few men meet early death unterrified;  
But, beast or man, neither avoids his fate,  
Soon . . . or by-and-by . . . or late.

Man in him has that  
To cause, if he so choose, his dying game;  
He, outfacing fate,  
Can play the man, and thereby bring no shame  
On self, or sire, or son: no whimper heard,  
Can stride towards great darkness unexplored.

All men are born,  
In or out of wedlock, without shame;  
Some, early from life torn,  
With steadfast will play bravely life's last game:  
Man's birth-pangs bring him life—reward of birth;  
Fragrant the memory of manly death.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

## PRESENT FREETHOUGHT SITUATION IN GERMANY

IN spite of the profound changes due mostly to the afflux of refugees and expellees, the religious structure of West German territory remains much the same as in 1939. The census of 1950 shows that 51.2 per cent. of West Germans are Protestants, 45.2 per cent. are Roman Catholics, 3.2 per cent. (i.e., over 1,500,000) declared to be Free religious or Freethinkers. The percentage of Protestant Christians is almost 1 per cent. higher, that of Roman Catholics  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. lower than in 1939.

In 1949 the Free religious and Freethought groups and individuals founded an all-German society called "Deutscher Volksbund für Geistesfreiheit," with the seat in Hannover, Sedanstr. 17. The following is the list of organisations belonging to it:—

- (1) *Bund Freireligiöser Gemeynden Deutschlands*, Ludwigshafen;
- (2) *Deutscher Freidenker-Verband*, President Hermann Graul, Braunschweig, Freyastr. 5;
- (3) *Deutscher Monistenbund*, Munich;
- (4) *Deutsche Unitarier*, Darmstadt;
- (5) *Vereinigung für freigläubige Feiargestaltung e V.*, Hamburg;
- (6) *Gesellschaft für Geistesfreiheit und Lebenskunde*, Duisburg.

The constitution accepted by these organisations calls for the freedom of belief and conscience, freedom of scientific research and teaching, in public, social and private life. It calls for protection against encroachments upon these rights whether by the State or economic organisations or Churches. It requires religion and ethics to be free of dogma. It is tolerant towards all religious and philosophic teachings whose representatives respect the freedom of belief and conscience. It condemns racial prejudice and propagates the idea of international peace. Members, whether groups or individuals, are free to keep their own religious and philosophic opinions, provided their activities in the organisations are free of dogmatic attitude. The Society is politically neutral.

—Compiled from publications of the German Society of Monists (Munich).  
A. W.

# The Wonders of Nature—II

By T. F. PALMER

IN his Gifford Lectures, Sir Charles Sherrington opines that Nature is neither moral nor immoral but displays every sign of indifference to what we deem ethical standards. It is true that she manifests many serene aspects, but there is no evidence of sustained benevolence. This is tantamount to a complete rejection of the design hypothesis and the acceptance of the concept that all that our globe exhibits is the resultant of the energies of the blind courses of Nature. As a striking example of reciprocity, Sir Charles cites the benign relationship and co-operation of insects with flowering plants: "The insect cross-fertilises the plant and the plant feeds the insect. It is a partnership that cannot be very ancient as the age of life goes, for the flowering plants are not very ancient. The alliance has been fruitful for each partner. It has, we may think, contributed to develop floral form, floral colour and floral scent." Thus, we owe all the flowers we so much admire and all the fruits we enjoy to this co-operation. Nectar and pollen, upon which insects feed and fertilise plants, presumably have produced the growth of remarkable instincts and apparently purposive activities which possess survival value in the struggle for existence. The presence of mentality in this association is an open question but, minus pain or injury to each associate, it serves to adorn the vegetable kingdom.

This pleasing picture, however, is heavily discounted by many malign phenomena which strengthen Aristotle's dictum that evil predominates in earthly affairs. Sherrington selects two baneful instances out of many of pain and untimely death of higher organisms that are due to the depredations of ignoble forms of life. These are the fluke worm and virus causing malaria. The former is a pond worm which wanders through the water as if in quest of prey. There also dwells a snail protected by a frail shell. This is what the worm is seeking in the few hours at its disposal. If successful, the worm bores into the lung of the water snail. "There," states Sherrington, "it turns into a bag and grows at the expense of the snail's blood. Its cells which line the bag make individuals, each simplicity itself. A gullet, a stomach, some glands and a genital spore. This is the *Redia*. . . . The cyst in the snail's lung is full of *Redia*. They bore their way out and wander about the body of the snail." They feed on its less vital organs so that their victim's life can be prolonged in order to enable them to reach their reproductive stage. Then they produce young that live within the dying snail. Ultimately, they emerge from their host and wander to the moist grass adjoining the pond. Among the herbage they encyst themselves and lurk until, as our lecturer states: "A browsing sheep or ox comes cropping the damp grass. The cyst is eaten. The stomach of the sheep dissolves the cyst and sets free the fluke worms within it. The worm is now within the body of its second prey. It swims from the stomach to the liver. There it sucks blood and grows causing the disease called sheep rot." Sheep infected with this malady within whose liver the parasites mature in a few months produce progeny that abandon their victim's liver for moist pasture and, once in the pond as larvæ soon seek another snail and resume the vicious cycle of their existence. As Sherrington indicates, this is a single instance among many in which lowly parasitic organisms flourish at the deadly expense of sensitive creatures immensely superior in the tree of life.

Another deplorable case instanced by Sir Charles is that of the pestilent mosquito, anophodes. This gnat's mouth

is provided with stabbing and sucking organs which penetrate the human skin and absorb blood. The female is the sole offender and thus nourishes her eggs. Once a day she bites her victim and then flies to a shady spot and digests her meal. She may be free from the virus of malaria, but if she has injected it, the result is disastrous to her prey.

This deadly insect possesses ingeniously contrived biting organs resembling daggers with saw-like edges. With these she penetrates the skin and thus invades the blood vessels of her victim and infects him with poison by injecting "a droplet of juice into the stabbed wound. This makes the blood vessels flush; they bring more blood to the stabbed spot. Also the juice delays the clotting of the blood which might balk the gnat of her full meal by cutting short the yield of blood from the tiny wound. Nature has provided her with special tools and a special zest for thoroughness. She sucks the blood by a tube which leads straight to her stomach."

The mosquito may be healthy, but is more likely to be infected with the parasite which causes malaria. These invade the circulating blood of the person attacked and with agonising if not fatal consequences. The parasites enter the red cells of the human blood and destroy them by multiplying within them and then emerge to destroy more red cells. Breeding as they do, inside the red corpuscles, they are safe from the onslaughts of the blood's white cells which never devour the red cells but act as scavengers by devouring invading germs which enter the bloodstream. Thus the malaria pest is safe from the white cells (leucocytes) while they remain within the red cells they infect. Those afflicted with malaria are the victims of intermittent periods of fever which weary and weaken the sufferer until he is released by death or medical skill. Various supplementary details of this malevolent malady have been revealed by scientific research, all alien to the theory of design which misled our ancestors. We now know that parasitic organisms inflict misery and death on entire regions of the earth. These diseases have been well termed "million murdering." Evolution has adapted them so that they can most delicately and effectively destroy superior forms of life.

Apart from other lands, 1,200,000 people perish in one year from malaria in India, while countless numbers suffer from its ravages. A dozen other diseases equally inimical might be mentioned. No marvel then that Sherrington cites Matthew Arnold's saying: "Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood; Nature and man can never be fast friends." All optimistic strivings to discover beneficence in her phenomena fail completely in the light of science. The only alleviation of the ills inflicted by Nature and, from those which men inflict on one another is friendly intercourse and the altruistic application of the truths revealed by the investigator of Nature's benefits as well as her misdeeds.

In conclusion, our lecturer opines that Natural Religion has no special ceremonies and erects no fanes. "The great religions," he avers, "as part of their anthropomorphism cultivate the Deity as a personal Deity. But this source of emotional strength Natural Religion is without, for it sublimates personal Deity to Deity wholly impersonal." Yet science has transcendent values, notably truth and beauty. As a relatively recent product of Evolution, he observes: "We have become human, an inalienable

(Concluded on page 351)

# George Santayana (1863-1952)

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE death of Santayana is the passing of one of the foremost philosophers of the century and a Materialist. It is rather satisfactory to record that the brief *Daily Telegraph* obituary referred to his atheism and freethought.

Santayana was born in Madrid of Spanish Roman Catholic parents, but it mattered little; his life and outlook were on the cosmopolitan scale. He achieved a mastery of the English tongue and his books are spangled with phrases of surpassing insight and felicity. Only one other Spaniard, I think, offers comparison here, Salvador de Madariaga.

Santayana was educated at Harvard, Berlin and Cambridge, but his own philosophy belongs to the American school of Realists which has come to tower over the philosophical scene to-day in the English-speaking world. "The whole of British and German philosophy is only literature," with the universe its novel and man its hero (*Scepticism and Animal Faith*, 1923). "I am a decided Materialist," he wrote in the same work. In the same year, his Herbert Spencer Memorial Lecture at Oxford shows him as a disciple of Spencer, who had discarded the Spencerian "Unknowable." "Calling substance unknowable is like calling a drum inaudible for the shrewd reason that what you hear is the sound and not the drum." His major contributions to philosophy, however, were his *Realms of Being*, in four parts (1928-39), and another important work was *Some Turns of Thought*, in addition to which he has figured in several representative American symposia, notably *Contemporary American Philosophy*.

As a materialist, matter or substance is his fundamental existent. "Matter is properly a name for the substance of the natural world, whatever that substance may be." As to its nature, "I wait for the men of science to tell me what matter is. But whatever matter may be, I call it matter boldly, as I call my acquaintances Smith or Jones without knowing their secrets." "Respect for matter is the beginning of wisdom."

How do we know matter exists? His answer is, by animal faith. We assume it and proceed to act on it, and find the assumption works. This is the only justification necessary. Human action presupposes a world of connected events, a flux of existence which must be continuous and measurable, otherwise action in it could not be prosperous or indeed consecutive. "The only object posited by animal faith is matter," to which alternative names are "substance" and "world of events." In readiness for action, animal faith posits a field existing substantially for science to describe, and all scientific knowledge is this "faith mediated by symbols." "The postulate of science—the assumption that there are things and events prior to the discovery of them, and independent of this discovery—underlies all knowledge."

"Metaphysical substance," of course, is only a grammatical term; the substance of the materialist is the stuff of physics. Not all Realists would be satisfied with Prof. Santayana's animal faith as the only justification for belief and action. And there are neo-Idealists who would contend that animal faith might presuppose anything the animal liked. Santayana meets this objection and so improves on Spencer, whose "Unknowable" might prove to be anything. Santayana finds substance to have certain existential characteristics which remove it from the Idealist category. And to say it is endowed with "mind-stuff" or is directed towards the evolution of mind is but "a poetic synonym for the actual fertility of matter." Mind is grafted out of, not infused into, evolving nature. "Mind

is bred in the material movements to which it refers," an immaterial manifestation of substance. "All origins lie in the realm of matter," even when "the being that is so generated is immaterial, because this creation of the immaterial follows on material occasions and at the promptings of circumstance." It is "the natural light by which existence, in its waking moments, understands itself." "Two natural conditions, organ and stimulus, must come together like flint and steel, before the spark of experience will fly."

As for the theory that the universe has an outside management, he finds "no vital analogy between the cosmos and the human organism," and "purposes presupposes organisms." All theology he regards as thoroughly discredited. "Religions are the great fairytales of the conscience."

The main criticism directed against Santayana from inside the materialist camp has been in regard to his theory of essences. According to him, we have animal faith in matter or substance; we do not sense it directly; what we experience is an "essence." Anything existent (matter, substance, noumenon) is more than the given description of it (form, essence). In its "blind need to shift" substance is endlessly passing from one form to another, and that which appears will be an essence. What is given is mere appearance, all surface. Depth, power, persistence—these are posited by the animal faith. Mind is thus one of the immaterial essences. A moral principle is an unembodied essence.

All matter is fit to be matter of anything if circumstances draw it into that form. It may at any time father an essence out of "an impalpable infinite unwritten catalogue of essences." The actual existence of an essence is therefore contingent and unstable. In itself it is non-existent because it depends basically on substance. Though substance contains virtually all essences, it is only by movements of matter that essences are made relevant. "Substance is the speaker and substance is the theme; sensing is the act of speaking and the given essence is the audible word." And he argues at some length that "truth is a furrow ploughed by matter along the face of essence."

Santayana's Essence theory was taken up by the panpsychists Durant Drake and C. I. Strong rather than by his own successors in the American materialists. In the development of 20th century Materialism Santayana has been a junction rather than a terminus. And the essence theory may be no more than a siding in disuse.

## Our Lady of the Moon

BUENOS AIRES, Tuesday.—The newspaper *La Prensa* reported to-day that the likeness of President Peron's dead wife, Eva Peron, appeared on the face of the moon on Sunday night.—*The Daily Express*, October 1, 1952.

### THE WONDERS OF NATURE—(Concluded)

prerogative of responsibility which we cannot devolve, no, not as was once thought, even upon the stars. We can share it only with each other."

Concerning the charge that science has furnished man with powers of destruction previously undreamed of, Sir Charles urges that its real objective is the establishment of truth. It discards "Olympus and the sky children . . . 'absolute time,' 'personal Deity,' to say nothing of 'good,' bad and right and wrong. Science is neither good nor bad, but only false or true."

## Is Charlie Chaplin a Freethinker?

By E. J. PAGE

ARTISTS like Shaw, Wells, Mark Twain, Jerome K. Jerome, Somerset Maugham, to mention only a few, did not believe in the superstition of Christianity, and I think we can claim Mr. Charles Chaplin amongst them. Give us, Charlie, a mocking flick of your cane against the humbugs, even if you do it as discreetly as Shaw did it in *St. Joan*.

In one of the early pictures we saw Charlie flying about in Heaven, not with his mind on spiritual things, but chasing pretty angels. He appeared to be on wires, and his white feathers moulted now and then. There was a distressing lack of reverence in the picture.

Another picture, I think called "*The Pilgrim*," showed a group of people waiting at the stop of the train to welcome the new pastor of the chapel. He did not turn up, but a man stepped forward to take his place, an adventurer seeking to gain from any situation. And who was this interloper? Why, our old friend Charlie! He was hospitably taken to a home where providentially there was a girl of exceptional sex attraction, and Charlie was "in clover."

At the chapel on Sunday Charlie was on the platform in front of the congregation, including the boy who kept scratching his head because down in the forest something stirred, and the courting couple more interested in each other than in the service. Now and then nudges restrained him from tapping a cigarette preparatory to lighting up. He was reminded that now was the time for the sermon, and he rolled his eyes and pursed his lips in despair. A bright idea came. He would give them the fable of David and Goliath. So he came down to the floor and, with every eye watching, he went through the performance of David slinging the stone and Goliath falling flat on his back. How the congregation cheered and clapped! Never had they seen a minister so good!

His new picture, "*Limelight*," is sure to have some pleasing moments, but it will not be quite like the old unsuccessful Charlie, thin and wistful. How we sympathised with him when he was bullied, and how delighted we were when he suddenly, unexpectedly turned and kicked the bully on the posterior! How clever he was juggling his cane and hat with such ease, and a face so solemn. Sometimes he was unlucky in love; haven't we all been? Poor Charlie in the "*Gold Rush*"; he cooked the dinner so carefully, and then the girl didn't turn up! We were so sorry for him, then he amused us with a delightful dance with the two bread rolls. You didn't really try to pick your tooth with your cane, did you, Charlie? You were only pretending. How splendidly you took the rise out of Hitler!

Welcome, Charlie. Good luck to you, and thanks for the memories. Give us revivals, selections from the best of your old pictures. Let us see you skating so wonderfully with the police skating on roller-skates after you, and other happy bits. Make some more pictures, funny and humanist. We love you. Let nothing you dismay!

THERE is scarcely a more melancholy spectacle on earth than a Church Congress. We do not degrade its dignity when we call it the parsons' palaver. Its deliberations never lead to anything. The clergy are tied hand and foot by laws which they cannot break. Yet they meet year by year, according to the modern fashion, and deluge the town in which they assemble with "words, words, words." They are fast losing their hold on the popular mind, and, having no power to adapt themselves or their religion to the altered circumstances of the age, they simply meet and chatter over their misfortunes.

## Correspondence

### WHAT DOES SCIENCE MEAN?

SIR.—While reading the article on Sir Charles Sherrington's Gifford Lectures, it occurred to me (as it has often done before) that many of these "scientific" words and phrases are actually just as meaningless as those of orthodox religion. To parody Shakespeare, "A mystery by any other name is just as strange." To me, the word "Nature," so revered in science, is no more an explanation of life than is the word "God." If one asks, "What is Nature?", as one asks "What is God?", I doubt whether the scientists' reply would be any better than the theologians.

Sherrington says that "man is a product . . . of the play of natural forces. . . ." This means precisely nothing. It is no better than saying "God created man in his own image." At least the Bible myth has the merit of being concrete, definite and precise. Sherrington's "scientific" phraseology is vague and unintelligible. What exactly are "natural forces," and what is this "play" they indulge in?

I hold no brief for religious dogma, which insults my intelligence. But science, too, should be honest enough not to hide behind a verbal smoke screen, assuming infallible and universal knowledge which cannot exist.

"We do not know, we cannot say" is the only truthful answer to life's mystery, "we can only guess." Let us not be arrogant because we talk of "Nature" instead of "God!" We don't know what we mean!—Yours, etc.,

FREDA PECKMAN.

### THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

SIR.—A writer who is not sure of his facts, and is not a specialist on a specialised subject, is a danger to the publication for which he writes, and to the public who tend to regard him as infallible.

I am referring to your writer of the article on "*The Dead Sea Scrolls*." I am not a specialist in this specialised subject, but I am semi-specialist, and have been in touch with specialists on this very subject.

Not only can I reassure readers that there is a view held by Professor Driver of Oxford that the scrolls are post-Christian, but I can tell them that the view that these scrolls are of a later time than was at first believed is spreading, so that authorities both here and abroad are now of the same opinion as the Professor. The work that goes into discovering the approximate date of anything likely to add to history is tremendous, and first findings are usually wrong. Tests and past knowledge have to contribute to this, and one man's theories are not enough, no matter how great an authority he may be. In these discoveries the archaeologist plays an overwhelming part, and in this instance the archaeologists state that the jars which surrounded the scripts can be dated at the first and second century *Anno Domini*.

This, you will agree, throws an altogether different light on the importance of these Scrolls, and disputes not the fact that there may have been two "Christs," or that a "myth" had arisen to quell the disturbed peoples of those times, but that your writer was wrong to doubt the words of Prof. Dupont Sommers, who thought that these finds would enrich Christian history.—Yours, etc.,

M. D. M. OUGHTON.

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